

Montanans for Responsible Energy Development

"The Grassroots Energizing Montana"

511 Pleasant Street
Miles City, MT 59301

November 16, 2004

Mr. Kenneth Blodgett
Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington, D.C. 20423

Dear Mr. Blodgett:

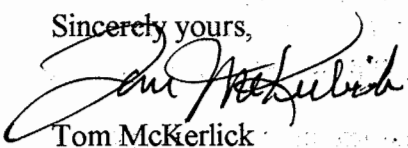
Re: Public Hearing on "Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement"
Tongue River Railroad
STB Finance Docket No. 30186 (Sub - No. 3)

Montanans for Responsible Energy Development are united in support of the proposed Western Alignment and other remediation measures that are a part of the above Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. From our position, it seems that the Tongue River Railroad Project is only enhanced by these measures and should be even more acceptable to the residents of this area. Further study of the area around the Miles City Fish Hatchery would also not seem necessary based on the distance between the proposed rail line and the hatchery site. The current BN line is closer and has not seemed to compromise the development of this fish hatchery.

We believe this rail project should move forward without delay due to the coal development potential opened up by its completion. Southeastern Montana desperately needs this coal development, potential power development, new tax base and new well-paying jobs to keep our communities viable. Without this project, we will continue to lose our young people, our communities and our schools.

We believe this action represents the potential for further "responsible" energy development in Montana. We have spent 25-30 years getting this far, it is time to move ahead.

Sincerely yours,



Tom McKerlick
Secretary/Treasurer